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In Love With Flying as a Boy

Took First Flight at Age of 14

—Was Star Athlete

at Milligan College

Immediately after his first ride in an airplane at the age of 14, Francis G. Powers, the American pilot whom the Russians say they have captured, told his father:

"Daddy, I like it up there. It does something to you. It gives you something. Someday I'll have to go back up there and find out what it is."

The excited, 14-year-old Powers had flown with a woman pilot who took up passengers for a \$2.50 fee from the Princeton, W. Va. airport. The brown-eyed, dark-haired boy had been so enthusiastic that she gave him double time for his money.

Francis Powers was born and spent many of his early years in Cumberland mountain territory along the Kentucky-Virginia border. He was born Aug. 17, 1929, at Jenkins, Ky., and attended high school on the Virginia side at Grundy.

Proficient in Athletics

From his early years Francis Powers has been proficient in athletics. He rode horseback on his father's farm, between Pound and Clintwood, Va. He was a lineman on the high school football team. And for a year he was a lifeguard at Jenkins.

At Milligan College in Johnson City, Tenn., he was a track star in the 220-, 440- and 880-yard events and won medals in those events at the 1950 Penn Relays.

In his three and a half years as a civilian pilot based in Turkey, he fished Turkish streams and took up skiing on leaves spent in Switzerland. His wife, the former Barbara Moore of Albany, Ga., is recovering from a broken leg suffered in a skiing accident.

After his graduation from Milligan in 1950, Mr. Powers enlisted in the Air Force. He was a corporal in the ground forces when he was discharged so that he could attend a civilian flying school at Greenville, Miss.

Returns to Air Force

His civilian pilot training included jets and he was soon back in the Air Force with a second lieutenant's commission and with a job as fighter pilot. That was in 1953. As a fighter pilot he won medals for shooting in a gunnery test. Part of the time he was based in Japan.

In 1956, after being mustered out of the Air Force as a first lieutenant, he went to work for

bank, Calif., said in a telephone interview yesterday that he did not know how long Mr. Powers had been in Turkey or any other details about him.

The pilot's father, Oliver W. Powers, 55, said in a telephone call that his son had been in Turkey for three and a half years and was due to complete his four-year contract, with Lockheed in October.

After that the younger Powers planned to build a home in California and to keep on working in aviation, his father added.

The father, who owns the Norton City Shoe Repair Shop in Norton, Va., was carrying in coal and wood at 5:15 A. M. to build a fire at his country house yesterday when the telephone rang. The New York Times was calling to give him the news that his son was alive.

"For the next forty-five minutes," Mr. Powers told a Norton reporter, "all I did was cry and answer the phone." For several days his son had been presumed dead.

Goes to Work as Usual

The elder Powers went to work as usual in his shoe shop yesterday. He described his son as 5 feet 8 inches tall and as weighing 170 pounds. The pilot's mother has a heart condition but has been informed of the situation. The pilot, an only son, has five sisters, four of whom are married. Two live in the Washington, D.C. area and the others are at Pound, Va.

The wife of the downed pilot is flying back to the United States and should arrive at her parents' home in Albany today or tomorrow, the elder Powers said.

Francis and Barbara Powers have no children.

Associated Press
Mrs. Francis G. Powers